



SERIES: GALATIANS

## **GALATIANS 2:11-21**

December 14, 2009

*But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.*

When conflicts arise, one should always deal with it openly and honestly with the person in question. What tends to happen is just the opposite: we talk behind the other's back, complain, and spread gossip, leaving the issue unresolved. This type of behaviour often shows up in the Church and is destructive, divisive, and downright demonic. Jesus teaches in Matthew 18:15-17 that we ought to speak to each other face to face concerning our differences in an effort to reach peace.

*12 For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. 13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.*

Here's the situation: according to the Old Testament law, Jews are supposed to adhere to certain restrictions in their diet. Jesus, however, died in part to remove the law, and so all Jews (like Peter) need not obey dietary restrictions anymore. Thus, while Peter was visiting in Antioch, he would eat with the Gentile Christians, who did not observe the dietary restrictions. However, when Jewish Christians came from Jerusalem, Peter went back to obeying the dietary restrictions in order to please them. Following his leadership, the other Jews behaved in a similar, two-faced manner.

*14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas [Peter] before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"*

Paul raises the issue because he sees it as marring the truth of the gospel. He confronts Peter and essentially asks him why he is behaving like a two-faced hypocrite. Peter, if he truly believes that Jesus has removed the law, should then disregard the law no matter who is around.

*15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*

Paul reminds us of the gospel, that God saves us by grace and not through our good deeds or obedience to the law. We are saved (justified) by God's goodness and not our own.

*17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!*



Even though God has removed the law, we still are to repent and cease from sinning. Christians, like everyone else, will still stumble. This does not mean that Jesus removed the law so we could sin; rather, he removed the law so that we may be free to live lives of obedience to him.

*18 For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.*

Peter ceased to obey the law because it was torn down by Jesus. Why then, would he go back to it around certain people? It makes no sense! Doing so is essentially saying that Jesus is not sufficient, but rather that we still need to obey the law to win God's favor. This is not in step with the truth of the gospel.

*19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Paul's language here describes the trade between God and man—God's holiness for man's sinfulness. Jesus took our place, became our sin, and caused Jesus to be crucified. Thus, it is just as if we were crucified with Christ. Not only that, but Jesus' resurrection gives us new life, thus it is as if Jesus lives in us. The Christian can identify with Christ in real and powerful ways.

*21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.*

Paul's final remarks concerning Peter's actions are essentially saying that Jesus is the source of new life and salvation, not the law or good deeds. If one could be saved through the law and good deeds, then Jesus died for nothing. The truth, however, is that Jesus' death was necessary as he died in our place for our sins—if Jesus didn't die, then we would have to.

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### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are there unresolved conflicts in my life that I have avoided confronting? Which individuals do I need to seek peace with, face to face?
2. In what ways do I act hypocritically? How am I two-faced? What people do I act differently around? (Repent of these sins)
3. How does it change me to know that Jesus died in my place for my sins?